

Jewish Identification and the Aliyah Readiness of North American Jews

Albert I. Goldberg

There are few reasons for North American Jews to consider migrating to another country. Their education and earnings (Chiswick, 1983) and entrance into elite positions (Alba and Moore, 1982) are well above their representation in American society. Thus, it is not surprising that few have settled in Israel, even when compared to low numbers coming from other Western countries (DellaPergola, 1984). Yet, a steady stream of North American Jews have decided to make the move to Israel: 2,827 arrived in Israel in 1984, and a peak aliyah of 8,122 arrived in the one year 1971 (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 1975; 1985).

A strong Jewish identification is seen as the primary factor explaining this movement, though small, of North Americans to a country that most see as too rural, excessively terrorized, and with an inadequate standard of living (Goldberg, 1984). For an observant Jew, a move to Israel may fulfill injunctions to settle in the Land of Israel (Jewish Agency, Department of Aliyah and Absorption, 1977). For those who are less religious, ethnic group involvement may have encouraged an intensive commitment to Israel (Waxman and Helmeich, 1977; Liebman, 1973; Elazar, 1976). Indeed, many immigrants felt strongly Jewish in North America (Berman, 1979, p. 139) to a point that made them uncomfortable there (Tabory and Lazerwitz, 1977, p. 99). Israel is seen as a place where they can lead a fuller Jewish life (Antonovsky and Katz, 1979, p. 53), can bring up their children to be Jews (Herman, 1977, p. 154), and can feel at home as Jews (Jubas, 1974, p. 122).

Studies of North American immigrants to Israel show them as ranking high on several indicators of Jewish identification. These settlers are more likely than the average North American Jew to be religiously observant (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 1980) and to show a preference for the more traditional Orthodox denomination of American Jewry (Dashefsky and Lazerwitz, 1979, p. 5; Engel, 1970, p. 164; Jubas, 1974, p. 105; Goldscheider, 1974, p. 380). Most had strongly Jewish upbringings (Antonovsky and Katz, 1979, p. 45) including some Jewish or Hebrew education (Engel, 1970, p. 165); Goldscheider, 1974, p. 377; Berman, 1979, p. 139). The majority belonged to at least one Jewish organization in the year before migration (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 1980, p. X) and their social involvements were almost exclusively with other Jews (Antonovsky and Katz, 1979, p. 46). On the other hand, the experience of antisemitism in America may be a reason for migrating but few immigrants saw this as an important factor in their own decision to move to Israel (Tabory and Lazerwitz, 1977, p. 95; Herman, 1977, p. 163; Antonovsky and Katz, 1979, p. 53).

However, descriptions of the Jewish identification of North American immigrants cannot fully explain their aliyah. Many who did *not* decide to settle in Israel also have strong Jewish commitments. The difficulty in using Jewish identification to predict aliyah may be due to its multi-dimensional nature; certain aspects may be more crucial than others for a decision to move to Israel. The analysis in this study highlights the identification dimensions more likely to influence a migration decision. The Jewish involvements of the aliyah-prone are compared to those of persons with a lower likelihood to consider settling in Israel.

Data and Method

This research made use of the Jewish Attitude Survey, constituting 415 self-administered questionnaires returned by a sample of North American Jews in 1979. With the aid of representatives from the Israel Aliyah Center of the Jewish Agency, there were 167 responses from individuals in contact with these offices. This provided the research with a larger representation of aliyah-prone than the 17% reported by Cohen (1984, p. 7) in a national sample of American Jews. Another 248 replies were collected from Jews in the same locations who did not contemplate migrating to Israel. In all, questionnaires were returned from four communities in Canada and fourteen in the United States, covering all the major concentrations of Jewish population and several small isolated Jewish communities.

Since this study was comparative, a stratified sampling procedure provided variance on key variables (Hyman, 1955). This method does not measure the representativeness of different Jewish identification dimensions but rather their impact on aliyah readiness. The extent to which the sample varies from the overall Jewish population of North American Jewry was estimated by a comparison of key background variables in the present survey and the U.S. National Jewish population sample of 1970 (Massarik and Chenkin, 1973; Harrison and Lazerwitz, 1982). This showed the present Jewish Attitude Survey sample to be biased toward those who were younger and more religious, as well as over-representing those who had visited Israel. This sample may be less assimilationist than the North American Jewish population but analytical techniques employed in this study make good use of this greater variance on essential variables.

Aliyah readiness was based on the question "are there any circumstances under which you might migrate to Israel?" Respondents were given five answer possibilities: 31% checked that they were ready to go; 5% listed the opposite, that they were not prepared to migrate under any circumstance. The rest of the sample divided evenly among three intermediate categories: "ready to consider the possibility"; "could be convinced with the right opportunities"; and "only under very special circumstances which they do not expect to occur".

Three statistical techniques were used in this research. Factor analysis confirmed the independence of dimensions and provided weights for items in scales developed for this study (Appendix, Table A). Smallest space analysis (SSA) was used to analyze the matrix of correlations between different dimensions (Guttman, 1968). This provided a graphic portrayal of the data matrix and allowed clusters of different dimensions to be visualized as they related to aliyah readiness. Finally, a multiple regression

was used to show relationships between aliyah readiness as a dependent variable and Jewish identification measures as independent variables. This method differentiated factors having direct effects from those having initial high correlations but whose impact was better explained by other influences, as well as from those factors with no measurable impact.

Measuring Jewish Identification Dimensions

The synthesis of previous work by Himmelfarb (1975) is a good starting point for exploring the multi-dimensional nature of Jewish identification. Himmelfarb separates the concept into ideational and behavioral aspects, and furthermore by the object of orientation – supernatural, communal, cultural, or interpersonal. These four orientations are reduced to two in this study for reasons articulated but not followed by Himmelfarb. The interpersonal orientation is removed by considering unique ethics and morals to be more a product than a basic dimension of Jewish identification (Himmelfarb, 1975, p. 607). The cultural orientation to a system is also excluded because of empirical difficulties in differentiating commitments to a system from positive attitudes toward the group or its religious base (Himmelfarb, 1975, p. 612). Thus, the supernatural and communal orientations become primary foci of Jewish identification.

However, a scheme based on these two orientations suffers from a static approach, with Jewish identification seen only as a fixed attribute of individuals. An activist orientation is introduced to provide a more dynamic element to this classification scheme. Individuals are evaluated for possible dissatisfaction with present commitments to the Jewish community and whether they are searching for a new understanding of their identification.

Furthermore, the three orientations – supernatural, communal and activist – are all ego-sustained since they characterize internal states of individual consciousness. Yet, self-identification also depends on the evaluation of self by others (Mead, 1934; Cooley, 1902; Avruch, 1978, p. 209). In such cases, irrespective of the individual's own concept of his/her self, others can force the individual to accept a Jewish identification. Thus, alter-sustained identifications are added to the classification framework. This may be due to intensive Jewish socialization at an early age that stabilizes a self-concept into later life, the visibility of respondents as Jews by others, or an antisemitic refusal by others to accept a Jew into normal social life (Herman, 1977, p. 148).

The resulting scheme consists of 15 dimensions and sub-dimensions for Jewish identification. Measures for 14 of these dimensions were developed for this study (Table 1) and related to an aliyah readiness.

Ideational aspects of the supernatural and affiliational (or communal) orientations were measured by three scales:

(a) *Doctrinal*: a supernatural orientation gauged by belief in major tenets of the Jewish religious tradition (Himmelfarb, 1975, p. 609). Respondents could agree with the statements: "there is a God who created the universe"; "the Torah is the word of God"; and "God will protect the Jewish people".

(b) *Saliency*: an affiliation concept commonly treated in the literature as a social-psychological identification with the group. Jewishness dominates individual con-

TABLE I. SUMMARY SCHEME OF JEWISH IDENTIFICATION MEASURES

I. Ego-sustained identification	
A.	Orientation to supernatural
	Attitudinal: Doctrinal
	Behavioral: Pietism
	Belong to Orthodox denomination
B.	Affiliational orientation
	Attitudinal: Salience of Jewish group membership
	Jewish reference group
	Behavioral: Communal ritual
	Associational - membership in Jewish organizations
	Fraternal - close friends are Jewish
C.	Activist orientation
	Attitudinal: Dissatisfaction with existing Jewishness (not measured)
	Behavioral: Searching behavior
II. Alter-sustained identification	
A.	From within the Jewish community
	Jewish background
B.	From outside the Jewish community
	Early antisemitism
	Present antisemitism
	Perceived antisemitism
	Identification by others as Jew

sciousness and reduces the relevance of other statuses (Herman, 1977, pp. 49-51). Factor analysis showed the following to belong to a single dimension: feeling that "being Jewish plays an important part in their lives"; feeling "more of a Jew than an American or Canadian"; accepting the importance to themselves of "contributing to the Jewish people", "bringing up children to be good Jews", and "leading a full Jewish life".

(c) *Reference group*: a second indicator of an affiliation orientation based on feeling close to role models who are members of different Jewish sub-groups (Merton, 1957, pp. 281-386; Lazerwitz, 1973, p. 206). Factor analysis showed a single frame of reference for attachments to various Jewish groups. This combined other Jews residing in North America, Jews living in Israel, Russia, and Middle Eastern countries, and Jews from earlier historical periods including Biblical times and the Holocaust.

Religious Jews engage in a large number of activities related to their beliefs. The majority of North American Jews, however, practice only those customs that are part

of a 'folk religion' consistent with the dominant affiliational values of the surrounding society (Lipset, 1969; Liebman, 1973; 1974; Goldstein and Goldscheider, 1974). The more demanding daily observances come to be practiced primarily by firm believers in the supernatural beliefs of traditional Judaism (Cohen, 1983, p. 72). This differential attention to rituals intrinsic to Judaism allows activities to be grouped as they relate more to supernatural or to affiliational orientations.

The following behavioral dimensions and sub-dimensions were used in this study. Two factors dealt with a supernatural orientation:

(a) *Pietism*: traditional practices measured by "use of different sets of dishes for meat and for milk foods (kosher)"; "attend synagogue at least once a month"; and "refuse to work on the Sabbath".

(b) *Orthodox denomination*: membership in this denomination of American Jewry as an indicator of greater acceptance of traditional behavior (Himmelfarb, 1980, p. 52; Harrison and Lazerwitz, 1982, p. 369).

Three factors dealt with behavior tied to affiliational orientations:

(a) *Communal Ritual Behavior*: included "celebrate the Passover with a Seder"; "fast on Yom Kippur"; "light Friday night candles".

(b) *Associational*: membership in either Jewish or Zionist organizations.

(c) *Fraternal*: a 'structural segregation' in which social relationships are primarily restricted to other Jews (Cohen, 1977, p. 999; Sklare and Greenblum, 1967, p. 272).

An activist orientation has both ideational and behavioral implications. Dissatisfaction with a present state of Jewishness was not examined in this study. Behavioral activism is based on a search for opportunities to restrict or expand present Jewish commitments. A withdrawal from Jewish identification such as information about other religions or by strongly assimilatory behavior (Caplovitz and Sherrow, 1977) – also not included in this research. This study did develop *Searching behavior*: defined as activities leading to the expansion of Jewish identification and found in such practices as actively reading Jewish material or studying Jewish customs and history.

Two forms of alter-sustained identification were included in this classification scheme. The first is based on influences internal to the Jewish community: *Jewish background*: constructed by weights derived from a factor analysis and combining "brought up in a home that either was Orthodox or had a strong Jewish identification", "majority were Jewish in neighborhood where you were brought up," "belonged to a Jewish youth movement", and "attended a Hebrew school".

A second alter-sustained Jewish identification is determined by those outside the Jewish community. Four factors were developed in this study:

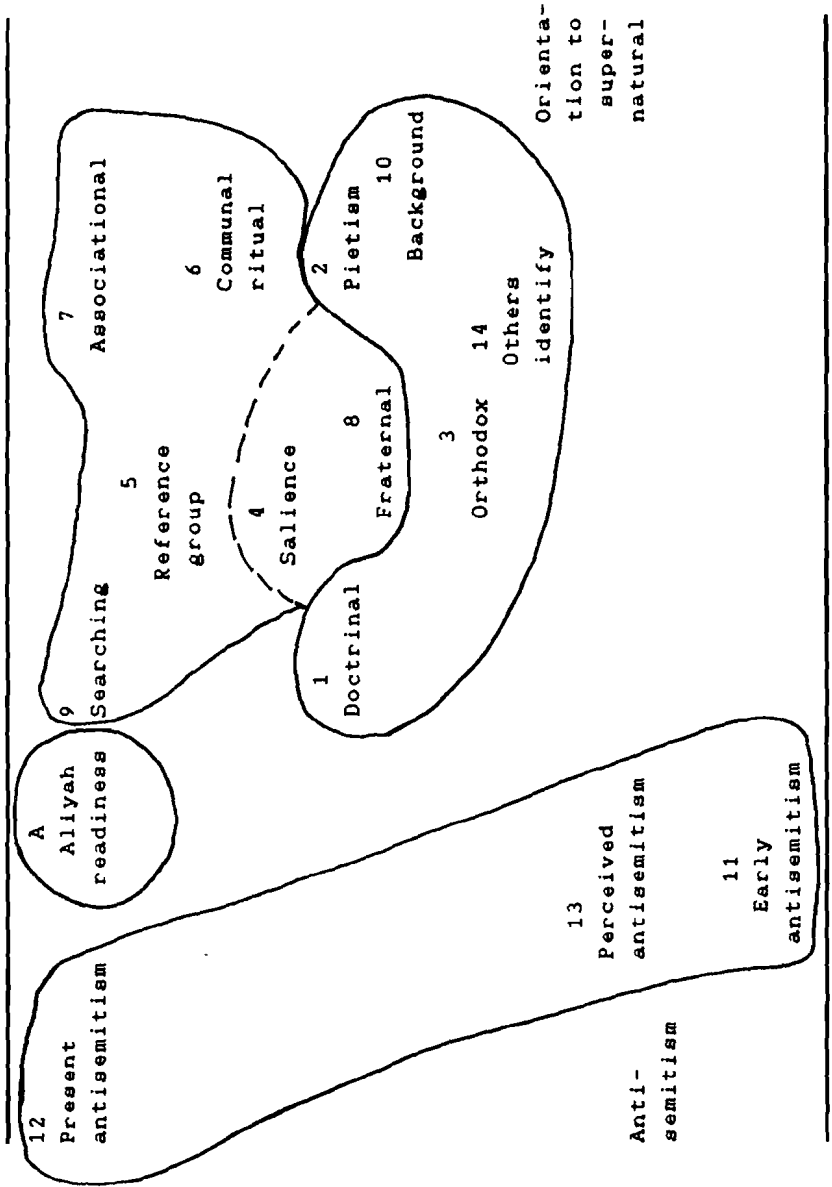
(a) *Others identify respondents as Jews*: felt that others see them as Jews without having to be told.

(b) *Perceived antisemitism*: agreement with the statement that "there is a strong antisemitism in North America".

(c) *Early antisemitism*: personal experiences of anti-Jewish hostility while growing up or while studying.

(d) *Present antisemitism*: personal experiences of anti-Jewish hostility at present domicile or workplace.

FIGURE 1. TWO-DIMENSIONAL, SMALLEST-SPACE REPRESENTATION OF THE 14 JEWISH IDENTIFICATION MEASURES AND ALIYAH READINESS^a



a. n = 392. Coefficient of Alienation = .199

Results

A correlation matrix of 14 Jewish identification variables and the aliyah readiness measure were used to construct a two dimensional graph by Smallest Space Analysis (Figure 1). Clusters representing items that have particularly high ties with one another are delineated in this figure by closed lines.

The most prominent feature of Figure 1 is the singular location of the aliyah readiness measure, indicating a unique placement in relation to other groupings. There are three clusters of Jewish identification variables shown to relate to this aliyah readiness. Separate effects derive from items representing orientations to the supernatural and from indicators of affiliational orientations. Salience and fraternal, however, are exceptions to this alignment of factors; while based on affiliational orientations, they are also significant for a commitment to the supernatural. Alter-sustained dimensions divide into two groups: the antisemitism items form a separate cluster with an independent impact on aliyah readiness, while Jewish background and identify by others as Jew are found within the grouping of supernatural orientation factors.

Results from the multiple regression using aliyah readiness as a dependent variable are found in Table 2. This table displays initial zero-order correlations and then standardized beta weights. The multiple regression shows six items to be significantly related to an aliyah readiness. These factors are found within each of the key divisions of Jewish identification. Among the dimensions of a supernatural orientation, membership in the Orthodox denomination of American Jewry has a significant impact on aliyah readiness. A doctrinal involvement with Judaism, however, is fully explained by the other dimensions of Jewish identification and loses its initial relevance (zero-order correlation) to an aliyah readiness. Pietism, when tested in the multiple regression without the confounding effects of other Jewish identification items, proves to have a negative impact on aliyah readiness. Therefore, Jews who are particularly rigorous in their expression of traditional behavior may reject the possibility of settling in Israel. This is evident in the unwillingness of some homogeneous religious groups to consider migrating to Israel because they are fully satisfied with life in a tight Jewish sub-community that they believe maintains adequate detachment from the general values of American society.

Salience is the Jewish identification dimension with the strongest influence on aliyah proneness. This factor has an impact both through its association with supernatural and with affiliational orientations (Figure 1). Other affiliational orientations – such as reference group, communal ritual, associational, and fraternal – show no direct influence on an aliyah readiness; while having significant zero-order correlations, they are almost completely explained by other items in the multiple regression. Searching behavior has the second highest beta in the multiple regression and shows how a quest for greater Jewish identification can encourage immigration to Israel.

Finally, alter-sustained identification dimensions are evaluated for their relevance to North American aliyah. The multiple regression shows only present antisemitic experiences to be a significant factor. The absence of a relationship to early antisemitism or perceived antisemitism restricts to recent events the importance of societal hostility toward Jews. On the other hand, others identifying the respondent as a Jew is negatively related to aliyah tendencies. The physical recognition of a Jew in North America may be based more on the behavior or special clothing of an observ-

TABLE 2. THE INFLUENCE OF VARIOUS MEASURES OF JEWISH IDENTIFICATION ON THE ALIYAH READINESS OF NORTH AMERICAN JEWS^a

Jewish identification measure	Zero-order correlation	Beta weight
I. Ego-sustained identification		
A. Supernatural orientation		
1. Doctrinal	.17	.00
2. Pietism	.08	-.11 ^b
3. Orthodox denomination	.13	.10 ^b
B. Affiliational orientation		
4. Salience	.38	.32 ^b
5. Reference group	.26	.06
6. Communal ritual	.11	-.01
7. Associational	.10	-.02
8. Fraternal	.12	-.03
C. Activist orientation		
9. Searching behavior	.35	.21 ^b
II. Alter-sustained identification		
A. From within the Jewish community		
10. Jewish background	.05	-.02
B. From outside the Jewish community		
11. Early antisemitism	.02	-.02
12. Present antisemitism	.19	.16 ^b
13. Perceived antisemitism	.08	.01
14. Others identify as Jew	.01	-.10 ^b
r ^a		.24

a. n = 394.

b. Less than .01 significance level as measured by F.

ant Jew than on distinctive facial or body characteristics. In this case, the finding parallels that of pietism and demonstrates the resistance of a particularly traditional group of North American Jews to settling in Israel. Surprisingly, a Jewish background has neither direct nor indirect consequences on aliyah readiness. This finding can be explained by the contradictory effect of a Jewish background (Appendix, Table B): encouraging aliyah through its ties to salience and membership in the Orthodox denomination while deterring aliyah by connections to pietism and others identifying them as Jews.

Conclusions

A readiness to consider aliyah is not the product of any one dimension of Jewish identification. Such a propensity is influenced by aspects of supernatural, affiliational, and searching orientations, as well as by an alter-sustained identification. There are indeed elements of a Jewish identification that can prevent immigration to Israel.

This analysis highlights the possibly misleading nature of several Jewish identification measures found to characterize many North American immigrants to Israel. Thus, a strong Jewish background has conflicting consequences on aliyah, and other factors lack direct relevance as found with membership in Jewish associations, restricting one's social circle to other Jews, and showing a high level of communal ritual behavior. Those particularly visible as Jews by their pietism and possibly unique dress are not necessarily more prone to consider aliyah. Highly committed circles of observant Jews are reluctant to settle in Israel, having found their group niche within American society and possibly deferring their aliyah until the coming of the Messiah.

North American Jews are brought to consider aliyah by the salience of their status as Jews over other areas of their lives. Jewishness becomes more important than the hold of their country of birth and their future work career. They desire a full Jewish life and to bring up their children to be good Jews. Those belonging to the Orthodox denomination of North American Jewry with a greater acceptance of doctrinal beliefs are more vulnerable to aliyah but not all and especially not necessarily those who may hold to more pietistic behavior.

Another factor contributing to aliyah from North America is a search by some Jews for greater meaning from their Jewishness. This quest can lead a North American Jew to contemplate settling in Israel. Such a pursuit is not necessarily grounded in a strong orientation to the supernatural and indeed correlates more highly with elements of an affiliational orientation (Appendix Table .B). This groping can result in the *Ba'alei Teshuva* phenomenon that brings North American Jews with a weak religious education to study at special yeshivoth in Israel. This search for greater Jewish meaning can also lead along secular paths and result in settling in an Israeli kibbutz or attending an Israeli university.

An increased aliyah from North America depends on the maintenance and expansion of Jewish identification among the continent's Jewish population. However, intentions to encourage such migration must be directed toward those Jewish identification dimensions which are specially relevant to aliyah. The State of Israel and the Zionist Movement may choose a passive approach and simply wait for an increase in antisemitism to push North American Jews to Israel. Such an eventuality, however, is not anticipated within the near future. Instead, this study points to several more dynamic possibilities. Existing programs of studies and of life experiences in Israel for North American Jews can be strengthened so as to give more outlets to those seeking increased Jewish identification. Furthermore, the State of Israel must come to be seen by North American Jews with a high group salience as the only country in which they could conceivably lead a full Jewish life.

Acknowledgement

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance in collecting data provided by several representatives of the Israel Aliyah Center of North America.

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TABLE A. MEASURES OF JEWISH IDENTIFICATION (INCLUDING WEIGHTS FOR INDICES AND PERCENT RESPONSE)

1.	Doctrinal	
	.31	Agree there is a God who created the universe (60%)
	.46	Agree the Torah is the word of God (49%)
	.28	Agree God will protect the Jewish people (34%)
2.	Pietism	
	.23	Use different sets of dishes for meat and for milk foods (45%)
	.14	Attend synagogue at least once a month (35%)
	.66	Refuse to work on the Sabbath (25%)
3.	Belong to Orthodox denomination	
		Associated with an Orthodox synagogue (17%)
4.	Sallience	
	.16	State that the fact they are Jewish plays a very important part in their lives (56%)
	.03	Agree to feeling a personal responsibility to remain a Jew for the sake of parents and ancestors (70%)
	.16	Feel more a Jew than an American or Canadian (73%)
	.13	Important to make a contribution to the Jewish people (65%)
	.31	Important to bring up children to be good Jews (78%)
	.35	Important to lead a full Jewish life (66%)
5.	Jewish reference group - Feel close to (identify with) Jews:	
	.22	Living in Israel (55%)
	.17	Who suffered in the Holocaust (66%)
	.30	Coming from Russia (17%)
	.31	Coming from Middle Eastern countries (15%)
	.18	Who lived in Biblical times (24%)
	.09	Living in North America (46%)
6.	Communal ritual	
	.17	Celebrate the Passover with a Seder (91%)
	.22	Fast on Yom Kippur (74%)
	.17	Light Friday night candles (62%)
	.44	Abstain from bread on Passover (75%)
	.21	Light Chanukah candles (83%)
7.	Associational	
	.39	Member of a Zionist organization (22%)
	.39	Member of any (other) Jewish organization (43%)
8.	Fraternal	
		"Almost all" or "all" of close friends are Jewish (51%)
9.	Searching behavior	
	.27	Study about Jewish customs and history (71%)
	.61	Read Jewish magazines (72%)
10.	Jewish background	
	.56	Brought up in a home that was either Orthodox or had a strong Jewish identification (81%)
	.06	Majority of those living in neighborhood where brought up were Jewish (58%)
	.17	Belonged to a Jewish youth movement (52%)
	.29	Attended a Hebrew day school (22%)
11.	Early antisemitism	
	.50	Personally experienced antisemitic acts while growing up (72%)
	.47	Personally experienced antisemitic acts while studying (53%)
12.	Present antisemitism	
	.38	Personally experienced antisemitic acts where they live (38%)
	.54	Personally experienced antisemitic acts at work (31%)

TABLE A. (Cont.)

13. Perceived antisemitism
Agree there is strong antisemitism in North America (54%)
14. Identification by others as Jew
Feel that other people usually identify them as Jews without telling them (47%)

TABLE B. CORRELATION MATRIX FOR THE 14 JEWISH IDENTIFICATION MEASURES (PERCENT)^a

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1 Doctrinal	--	41	37	44	24	24	11	21	15	16	04	11	13	15
2 Pietism	41	--	58	42	26	15	21	25	12	33	-02	-04	-01	26
3 Orthodox	37	58	--	33	18	11	12	26	11	31	06	-07	07	24
4 Salience	44	42	33	--	49	40	31	43	43	30	06	05	16	28
5 Reference group	24	26	18	49	--	19	30	26	37	13	03	06	00	19
6 Communal ritual	24	15	11	40	19	--	18	19	05	22	00	04	08	23
7 Associa-tional	11	21	12	31	30	18	--	20	24	13	03	-08	-02	16
8 Fraternal	21	25	26	43	26	19	20	--	22	31	10	-08	15	34
9 Searching	15	12	11	43	37	05	24	22	--	17	08	05	03	12
10 Background	16	33	31	30	13	22	13	31	17	--	05	-13	01	29
11 Early antisemitism	04	-02	06	06	03	00	03	10	08	05	--	-02	24	05
12 Present antisemitism	11	-04	-07	05	06	04	-08	-08	05	-13	-02	--	16	-02
13 Perceived antisemitism	13	-01	07	16	00	08	-02	15	03	01	24	16	--	08
14 Others identify	15	26	24	28	19	23	16	34	12	29	05	-02	08	--

a. n = 392.